

EAP 223 Academic Reading – Outside Reader: *Things Fall Apart*
PREREADING STUDY GUIDE – Chapters 1-4

Study Questions for Chapters 1-4 Use these questions to guide you through your reading of chapters 1-4.
Document your answers on this sheet to help you study for the quiz on chapters 1-4.

ANSWERS:

1. Why was Okonkwo famous?
He was a well known, successful wrestler when he was young. As an adult, he was a wealthy farmer and strong warrior.
2. Describe Unoka.
He was Okonkwo's father. He was lazy and improvident. He constantly borrowed money that he didn't repay.
3. Why had the men of Umuofia called a meeting?
The men of Mbaino, a neighboring village, had murdered a woman of Umuofia, and the men wanted revenge.
4. Where does the story take place?
It takes place in the village of Umuofia, in Africa.
5. What influence did the oracle have on decisions made in Umuofia?
The men didn't go to war unless the reason was accepted by the oracle.
6. What were Okonkwo's greatest fear and greatest passion?
He was afraid that he would resemble his father. His greatest passion was to hate everything his father loved.
7. What upset Okonkwo most about his son, Nwoye?
Nwoye was lazy, not ambitious.
8. What did Okonkwo bring home from his trip to Mbaino?
He brought home a boy from the village. His name was Ikemefuna.
9. How did Okonkwo begin his prosperous career?
He took gifts to a wealthy man in the village and asked him for some yam seeds.
10. How did Ikemefuna react to living with Okonkwo's family?
At first he tried to run away, and refused to eat. The family treated him well and he began to get used to living with them.
11. What unheard of thing did Okonkwo do during the Week of Peace?
He beat his second wife.
12. How did the people view yams?
Yams stood for manliness, and one who could feed his family on yams all year was a great man.

Vocabulary for Chapters 1-4

Part I: Using Prior Knowledge and Context Clues.

Below are the sentences in which the vocabulary words appear in the text. Use any clues you can find in the sentence, combined with your prior knowledge, to understand the italicized words.

1. The drums beat and the flutes sang and the *spectators* held their breath.
2. In his day he was lazy and *improvident* and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow.
3. He wore a *haggard* and mournful look except when he was drinking or playing his flute.
4. An ultimatum was immediately dispatched to Mbaino asking them to choose between war on the one hand, and on the other the offer of a young man and a virgin as *compensation*.
5. & 6. And so when Okonkwo of Umuofia arrived at Mbaino as the proud and *imperious emissary* of war, he was treated with great honor and respect, and two days later he returned home with a lad of fifteen and a young virgin.
7. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in *perpetual* fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children.
8. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and *capricious* gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of the forces of nature, red in tooth and claw.
9. Okonkwo's first son, Nwoye, was then twelve years old but was already causing his father great anxiety for his *incipient* laziness.
10. But he was struck, as most people were, by Okonkwo's *brusqueness* in dealing with less successful men.
11. Only a week ago a man had contradicted him at a *kindred* meeting which they held to discuss the next ancestral feast.
12. But it was really not true that Okonkwo's palm kernels had been cracked for him by a *benevolent* spirit.

Note: The *harmattan* is a dry, dusty wind that blows from the Sahara and along the northwestern coast of Africa.

Part II: Determining the Meaning. Match the vocabulary words to their dictionary definitions.

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| __E__ 1. spectators | A. not providing for the future |
| __A__ 2. improvident | B. lasting for eternity |
| __L__ 3. haggard | C. characterized by doing good |
| __K__ 4. compensation | D. an agent sent in advance |
| __I__ 5. imperious | E. observers |
| __D__ 6. emissary | F. related to a clan or tribe |
| __B__ 7. perpetual | G. impulsive and unpredictable |
| __G__ 8. capricious | H. abrupt and curt manner; blunt |
| __J__ 9. incipient | I. arrogantly domineering; overbearing |
| __H__ 10. brusqueness | J. beginning to exist or appear |
| __F__ 11. kindred | K. payment; reimbursement |
| __C__ 12. benevolent | L. appearing worn and exhausted |